

Dr. Nicole De Armendi

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Office: Robinson Hall B 377A

Office hours: Tuesday 10:30-11:30 AM, Thursday 1:30-2:30 PM  
& by appointment

### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVE

This course will introduce the student to the critical issues and major artistic developments of art since 1945. Examining major works of art and the artistic contributions of particular artists who revolutionized art during the second half of the twentieth century, the student will gain a greater understanding of artistic trends and innovations that led aesthetic production in new directions during this period. Among the critical issues that will be considered are the new materials of art, the re-assessment of the art object, intersections of art and life, the shifting contexts of art, the concepts of "modernism" and "postmodernism," the re-definition of "Art," the changing role of the artist, the active spectator, and the politicization of art. Students will examine and discuss major artworks and related concepts in light of artist statements, writings by art critics, and prevalent theories of art. The course objective is to provide the student with the historical framework and theoretical tools needed to critically evaluate mid-to-late twentieth century art and the more recent art of the emerging twenty-first century.

*CAUTIONARY NOTE: Because many contemporary artists address issues of gender, race, class, religion, sexuality, violence, and global imperialism, as well as different conceptions of beauty, some material viewed and discussed in this course is of a sensitive nature. Keep in mind that one goal of much contemporary art is to challenge viewers to see things from different perspectives or to confront issues that may be uncomfortable, controversial, and / or offensive. Be prepared to encounter and understand the motivations behind these expressions. You are not expected to like all the works you will encounter, but you will be expected to discuss these challenging works and to engage with the difficult issues and topics they raise in a critical and respectful manner. The goal is for you to understand the artists' reasons for creating these works and their art historical significance.*

### GRADING

30%	Two Exams (15% each)
20%	Final Exam
30%	Research Paper
10%	Presentation
10%	Class participation (attendance, assignments, and class discussion)

### GRADE SCALE

A+ 100-99	A 93-98	A- 92-90	
B+ 89-87	B 86-83	B- 82-80	
C+ 79-77	C 76-73	C- 72-70	
D+ 69-67	D 66-63	D- 62-60	F 59 & below

*\* Regardless of numerical score, a grade of A+ will be given as a final course grade only if the student's overall performance in the course is exceptional and exceeds course expectations.*

### BLACKBOARD

The Blackboard page for this course is an essential component of this course. In it you will find course documents, required readings not found in the textbook, study guides, exam images, detailed information about assignments, and important announcements. It is imperative that you familiarize yourself with the website immediately. **BE SURE TO CHECK IT OFTEN – ESPECIALLY BEFORE COMING TO CLASS. You are responsible for all information posted on Blackboard.**

### MASON EMAIL

**MasonLIVE is the required email address** for all GMU correspondence. You are responsible for all email messages sent to your MasonLIVE email account. Be sure to **check it frequently** and **clear your inbox so that you are not over quota**. If you rely on another email account, you should consider forwarding your MasonLIVE emails to the account you check most often.

When emailing the instructor, be sure to **include your name, class, and meeting day / time**. I will make every effort to respond in a timely manner. You can expect a reply within 1-2 days. If you have not heard back after 48 hours, please resend (email does at times get lost in cyberspace).

**Before emailing, be sure that you are not inquiring about any of the following:**

- **Information that is easily found in the syllabus, textbook, handouts, or any course document.**  
*I am happy to clarify or elaborate on certain elements, but cannot be expected to look up information that I have already provided and made easily accessible to you.*
- **What you missed in class the day you were absent.**  
*It is your responsibility to be in class and to contact a classmate for notes and any other information you missed during an absence from class, regardless of the reason for your absence. Once you have reviewed this material, then we can set up a time to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about the information you missed.*
- **To define terms, explain concepts, or re-teach information delivered in class.** I am happy to clarify and discuss any course material that is unclear after the student has taken the initial step to engage the material.

*If you are unclear about an idea discussed in class, review your notes and the textbook section on that topic, and then formulate a more focused question that you can raise in class or discuss in person during office hours. Email is not an effective means of teaching or clarifying course content. Instead, email me to request a time to meet and discuss the material. I am always happy to assist students with any difficult course material.*

**\*\*\* Email messages containing any of these requests will not receive a reply.**

## CLASS PARTICIPATION

Your final class participation grade will be calculated according to your attendance, completion of in-class and take-home assignments, and contribution to class discussions. Other situations in which you participate and demonstrate a high degree of engagement with the course will also be considered (for example: discussions with the professor during office hours or engaging the material in ways that exceed course requirements)

### ATTENDANCE

*The majority of the course content will be presented in the class lectures. The textbook is a supplement to the lecture material, providing critical readings on the topic under evaluation. **Therefore, in order to be successful in this course, you must attend class regularly, take good notes, and come prepared to discuss the assigned readings, as well as, the material presented in class.** In addition to the course content, **there may also be important announcements and reminders issued in class for which every student will be held responsible, whether they were in attendance or not.***

### Attending Class

- An attendance sheet will be placed at the front of the classroom each day we meet – it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to make sure you sign it before class starts. If your signature is not on the sheet, you will be marked absent; if you sign it after class, you will be marked late.
- Attendance does not simply mean showing up to class.  
Attendance is defined as **arriving on time, attending the entire class period, paying attention to the lecture, and being courteous.**
- Habitual tardiness, early departures, and disruptive entrances will not be tolerated. Plan your schedule accordingly.

### Absences

- You are allowed two free absences without consequence.
- These free absences are offered to assist with any emergency situations that may arise. Reserve them for unexpected situations, since **there will be no excused absences**. Do not send emails informing me of your absence, explaining why you didn't attend class, or inquiring about having an absence excused.

- In the case of extenuating circumstances that require a student to miss more than a week of classes, the absence must be explained in a signed and dated letter from a physician, the dean, or other comparable authorizing agent. Only under these conditions will I *consider* re-evaluating your grade. Assignments for other classes, travel plans, and most employment situations are not excusable. For these cases, you may employ the two free absences described above. Schedule your time accordingly.
- If you must miss class, it is ***your responsibility to get notes***, handouts, and any important announcements from another student.

## ASSIGNMENTS

*Occasionally there may be an in-class or take-home assignment to complete. These assignments may take the form of group work, answering a series of questions, responses essays, a “pop quiz,” a open-note quiz, etc. These assignments are designed to facilitate student learning and to assess the student’s level of comprehension.*

- In-class assignments that are missed because of an absence **cannot be made up.**
- ***Students are required to keep up with the course material by reading before the lecture, taking good notes, and reviewing the notes before the next class session.*** If it becomes clear that students are not fully prepared for class, students will be quizzed and/or called upon to answer questions about the material under review.

## CLASS DISCUSSION

*This portion of the class participation grade will be assessed according to not only the frequency, but also the quality of the student’s contribution to the discussion, taking into consideration whether the student raises substantial questions about the material, answers questions in a critical manner, and initiates further discussion. Discussions during office hours will also be assessed in this manner and considered toward this element of class participation. Each student’s class participation grade will also take into account how attentive and respectful the student is while others are speaking.*

## GRADING CLASS PARTICIPATION

The GMU catalogue states: ***“Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register... instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of non-participation.”***

*The class participation grade will take into account the student’s attendance, the level of performance on assignments, any contribution to class discussion, and the overall level of commitment and engagement with the course. Therefore, a student’s class participation grade will drop considerably if he or she is disrespectful or disruptive to the learning environment we create in the classroom.*

- All students will start with a grade of “B+” which indicates that the student has met the expectations for class participation (regular attendance, being on time, keeping up with the readings, completing assignments successfully, paying attention, and participating in group activities).
- An “A” will be given to any student participating at an exceptional level (having perfect attendance, playing a critical role in class discussions, and demonstrating a significant engagement with the course).
- A grade of “B-” or lower will be issued according to the severity of any of the following situations:
  - Being unprepared for class
  - Disrupting lecture or discussion with questions answered in the study guide, text book, or a lecture you missed
  - Missing more than a week’s worth of class
  - Excessive tardiness or early departures
  - Missing a test or failing to submit an assignment
  - Disruptive behavior of any kind (see section on classroom etiquette below)

## CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

### NO Electronic Devices in the Classroom

- **Computers, tablets, phones, and all other electronic devices** (mp3s, PDAs...) **must be OFF and stored out of sight.**

A visible or noisy device is disruptive and will be subject to the terms of disruptive classroom behavior as stated below.

### Disruptive Behavior

***We are all responsible for maintaining a respectful and courteous classroom atmosphere.  
There is no excuse for disruptive behavior of any kind.  
I do not take kindly to behavior that is discourteous and which inhibits others from learning.***

Disruptive behavior includes:

- (1) Violations of the electronics regulation as stated above.
- (2) Distracting physical behavior.

*For example: sleeping, talking while someone else is speaking (the professor or a student), wandering in and out of class, working on unrelated assignments, gesturing inappropriately, approaching the front of the classroom during lecture, etc.*

- (3) Discourteous or offensive language and behavior.

***In short, any behavior that is distracting to the professor or to your fellow classmates is disruptive and compromises the learning environment.***

### Consequences for Disrupting the Learning Environment

***All disruptions – with or without warning – will result in lowering the overall class participation grade***

- If lecture must be interrupted to address a student who is behaving inappropriately, his or her grade will drop significantly
- In the case of extreme or recurring disruptions, the student will not be allowed to remain in class and the final course grade will be negatively affected

*\* The consequences will reflect the severity and frequency of the disruption.*

## EXAMS

Exams are non-cumulative and serve the purpose of assessing how well the student comprehends the course material. The in-class portion will be objective, consisting of a combination of any of the following: slide identification, multiple choice, matching, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and/or term definitions. Questions will be drawn from lecture notes, class discussions, readings, assignments and handouts. A take-home essay component will also be required for each exam, allowing the student to delve more deeply into critical issues of contemporary art, demonstrating how well they comprehend and can articulate the more nuanced concepts presented in the readings and in class. This part of the examination is an opportunity to analyze, apply, and synthesize the course material, as well as to utilize the specialized vocabulary of the field. Regular lecture attendance and close readings of course materials are therefore necessary for a passing grade. More details will be provided as the exams approach.

***Study guides with key terms and image lists will be available for each lecture and posted on Blackboard.*** Students must print the study guide pertaining to that day's lecture and bring it to class with them, since much of the course material (including terms and images) will not be found in the textbook.

**All exams are required.** Failure to take a scheduled exam will result in a grade of "0" for that exam. **MAKE-UPS WILL NOT BE GIVEN**, except in emergency situations and at my discretion. If you miss an exam for an excusable reason, you must inform me PRIOR to the exam or, in an emergency, no later than the next day.

*In the case of such extenuating circumstances as a death in the family, accident, serious illness, court hearing, or approved university function, absences must be explained in a signed and dated letter from a physician, the dean, a faculty advisor, or other comparable authorizing agent. Only under these conditions will I consider administering a make-up examination. Without legitimate documentation even these excuses will not be reason for making up the missed exam. Assignments for other classes, travel plans, and most employment situations are not acceptable excuses. Schedule your time accordingly.*

**\*\*\* If you have any questions about the exams or how to study, please see me well in advance of the first exam. I am happy to suggest tips and strategies for succeeding in an art history class and to help any student implement more effective study habits.**

## RESEARCH PROJECT

*\*\*\* Detailed project information, writing guidelines, and presentation standards will be provided on separate handouts \*\*\**

This project requires students to analyze and discuss recent art by applying the skills and knowledge they have acquired in class, as well as by contextualizing them within the grander scope of the practices and issues of contemporary art. To fulfill this objective, each student will research a topic dealing with art since 1980 and that will prepare a 5-7 page paper as well as a 5-minute in-class presentation using that research material. The project presents the student with an opportunity to explore a topic that interests them personally and to put into practice the skills and knowledge acquired in the first part of the semester. It is also an exercise for strengthening communication skills since the student will present the material he or she has analyzed in both spoken and written form. In addition, it is also presents the class with an occasion to learn about recent art in a broader global context and to discuss the material with their peers in a space of critical reflection.

A list of artists and other suggested topics will be provided on Blackboard. Please review the list for ideas, choose three topics you would like to research (in order of preference), and submit these for review no later than Thursday, September 6. You are not required to select from the list, but all topics must be approved before you commence the research process.

## RESEARCH PAPER

Once your topic is approved, begin researching it. Be forewarned that Internet sources will be scrutinized and scholarly sources will be expected for a passing grade. To assist students with the research and development of a focused research question, deadlines have been provided for two research updates and inserted into the class schedule included in this syllabus. Please take note of each deadline. These deadlines will help you stay on track and will guarantee that the material you present to your colleagues is accurate and relevant to the course. More detailed information about the paper and these research updates will be provided on a separate handout.

The paper is due in class the day you present. As with any research project, I encourage everyone to approach this assignment with much anticipation. You have most of the semester to work on these papers and to plan ahead. Make sure you begin the process ahead of time, stick to the research deadlines, and come see me with any questions you have about the assignment. Not understanding assignment guidelines will not grant you an opportunity to revise your paper. Plan ahead for computer and printer problems, sickness, emergencies, libraries being closed, etc. These are not acceptable excuses. Also give yourself time to edit, revise, ask me any last-minute questions, and contact The Writing Center (see contact information listed below).

## PRESENTATION

The presentation transforms the student into a teacher, a role each student should take very seriously since they will be responsible for presenting course material to their classmates and for leading a critical discussion on the topic. Each student will be given 5 minutes to present their research topic during the last five weeks of the semester; the dates will be determined according to the topics selected. This material will then be used for class discussion (led by the student) and as material for the final exam. Therefore, each student must be very well-prepared when they present and very attentive when listening. Please note that simply presenting to the class will not earn you a satisfactory grade. The presentation will be graded in accordance with the quality of your discussion and analysis, how well you understand the course material, and how well you prepared and presented the material, in short, how well you taught the class. A digital copy of your presentation is due no later than 10pm the day you present.

*If you prefer to present with another student, speak with me immediately. We will discuss alternative topics that will accommodate "team-teaching." This will be clarified in class.*

Thursday, October 18 has been reserved for students to work on finalizing their research and drafting their papers. Presentation guidelines will be posted the following week. By that time, you should be done with the research and have begun to work on the final draft of your paper, so you can focus on the upcoming exam and presentation.

\*\*\* ***I am always available to discuss any questions or concerns about your topic, as well as to suggest research sources and strategies. As with any research project, I encourage everyone to approach this project with much anticipation.***

## LATE SUBMISSIONS

***All assignments must be submitted in class in the form of a hard copy on the day it is due.***

- Unexcused absences are not acceptable excuses for the late submission of an assignment.
- E-mailed assignments will not be accepted, except in the case of your presentations.

Points will be deducted for lateness – half a letter grade (5 points) for each calendar day your assignment is late.

- The only exceptions to the 5-points rule are the deadlines established for the components of the research process (topic submission, bibliographies, list of illustrations, etc.). Submitting any of these late will result in a 1-point deduction from the final paper grade for each day that one component is late.
- No assignment will be accepted after being five days late.

If you require an extension, you must discuss your situation with me well BEFORE the due date in the event that you are not granted the extension.

## ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Assignments must be written in good standard English. If English is not your first language, please see me so we can discuss a strategy to help you succeed in this course. Email correspondence will not suffice; you must come speak with me. Also, do not wait until a few days (or the night before) the exam date or assignment deadline to address this; you will not have enough time to remedy the situation.

Please contact the following centers for assistance. But be sure to plan in advance; they are very busy, especially as the semester comes near its end.

The Writing Center      Located in Robinson Hall A114 & Enterprise Hall 076  
703.993.1200 or <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

The English Language Institute (ELI)      703.993.3660 or <http://eli.gmu.edu>

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Each student is responsible for observing academic integrity with regard to all work assigned in this course. It is the student's responsibility to familiarize herself/himself with GMU's Honor Code as outlined in the university's catalogue: (<http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=5&navoid=410&bc=1>). Neither plagiarism (presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own) nor cheating will be tolerated. Also refer to <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/>

## STUDENTS NEEDING ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations will be made for students with documented disabilities, in accordance with law and university policies. Students requiring accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) -- (703) 993-2474, <http://ods.gmu.edu> -- to self-identify their needs and attain necessary documentation. After meeting with the Coordinator, please arrange a meeting with me **well in advance of the first exam or the class during which special accommodations will be required.** It is your responsibility to remind me in advance of each exam that you are in need of specific accommodations.

## READING LIST & CLASS SCHEDULE

### REQUIRED TEXT

Fabozzi, Paul F, ed. *Artists, Critics, Context: Readings in and around American Art since 1945*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2002. [ACC]

Additional required readings will be available in JSTOR or on Blackboard in topic-specific files that correspond to the lecture schedule. [JSTR/BBD]

- The textbook is available at the Bookstore, Johnson Center
- JSTOR is an online database of full-text academic journal articles. It can be accessed on the library webpage (<http://library.gmu.edu>). More information on these readings will be announced in class and on Blackboard.

The readings listed in the calendar below are all required. ***You are expected to have the readings completed by the day listed and must be ready to discuss them in class.*** Some reading assignments are demanding – give yourself plenty of time to read in advance of the due date. For each class you will need to read the material carefully and critically.

### READING CRITICALLY

While reading the texts, summarize the author's argument (paying close attention to the main points and supporting evidence), then formulate your own response by asking yourself if you agree or disagree with the author's viewpoint and why. As you read, define unfamiliar terms and write down anything that strikes you – a question you might have, something you may not understand, a weak point in the argument, ideas that come to you... These will prove to be excellent sources for generating class discussion and studying for exams. Please see me for more guidance if you feel unsure about the readings.

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\*\*\* The following schedule is subject to change according to the development and needs of the class \*\*\*

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***Videos, additional readings, and other materials may be added to this list as the semester develops, according to class discussions. You will be notified in class of any additional assignments or changes to the schedule with enough time to prepare.***

### INTRODUCTION

Tuesday, Aug 28	Course Overview
Thursday, Aug 30	What is Contemporary Art?

### ART BEFORE MID-CENTURY

Tuesday, Sep 4	Modern Art & the "Avant-Garde"
*** Last day to add classes & to drop classes without financial penalty ***	
Thursday, Sep 6	Dada, Surrealism and A New Center for the Avant-Garde
*** RESEARCH TOPICS are due in class ***	

### ACTION PAINTING & MODERNISM

Tuesday, Sep 11	Abstract Expressionism [ACC] Pollock, Rothko, de Kooning (2-10)
Thursday, Sep 13	Action Painting and the Arena of the Canvas [ACC] Rosenberg "The American Action Painters" (23-32)

- Tuesday, Sep 18**      **Greenbergian Modernism and a Formalist Reading of AbEx**  
[ACC] Greenberg "Towards a Newer Laocoön" (10-22)
- Thursday, Sep 20**      **Modernist Painting and Sixties Abstraction**  
"Modernist Painting" (201-208)

### INTEGRATING ART & LIFE

- Tuesday, Sep 25**      **John Cage, Chance Operations, and Rauschenberg**  
[ACC] Rauschenberg "Artist Speaks" (68-75)
- Thursday, Sep 27**      **Making Sense of a New Landscape**  
\*\*\* FIRST RESEARCH UPDATE is due in class \*\*\*
- Friday, Sep 28**      \*\*\* Final day to drop classes \*\*\*
- Tuesday, Oct 2**      **Assemblage, Environments and Happenings**  
[ACC] Oldenburg "I am for an art..." (56-59); Kaprow "Happenings in the NY Scene" (60-68)
- Thursday, Oct 4**      \*\*\* EXAM 1 \*\*\*
- Tuesday, Oct 9**      **NO CLASS – University rescheduling Columbus Day cancellation**
- Thursday, Oct 11**      **Fluxus**  
[JSTR/BBD] Readings TBA
- Tuesday, Oct 16**      **Pop Art**  
[ACC] Alloway "The Arts and the Mass Media" (115-118)
- Thursday, Oct 18**      **NO CLASS – Professor Attending Conference**  
*Use the class time to work on finalizing your research and preparing Tuesday's assignment.*

### IN THE NATURE OF MATERIALS

- Tuesday, Oct 23**      **Minimalism: A Reconsideration of Objects**  
[ACC] Stella (168-172); Judd "Specific Objects" (173-179)  
[BBD] Morris "Notes on Sculpture"
- \*\*\* SECOND RESEARCH UPDATE is due in class \*\*\*
- Thursday, Oct 25**      **Space, Process and Materials**  
[ACC] Morris "Anti-Form" (216-218); Serra "Verb List" (234-235)

### THE "DEMATERIALIZATION" OF THE OBJECT

- Tuesday, Oct 30**      **Earth Art**  
[ACC] Holt "Sun Tunnels" (250-257)  
[JSTR/BBD] Readings TBA
- Thursday, Nov 1**      **Conceptual Art & Systems Aesthetics**  
[ACC] LeWitt "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" (180-183); Haacke interview (308-318);  
Burnham "Haacke's Cancelled Show" (346-355)
- Tuesday, Nov 6**      **Performance and Body Art**  
[ACC] Burden statements (334-339); watch Burden video  
[JSTR/BBD] Readings TBA
- Thursday, Nov 8**      \*\*\* EXAM 2 \*\*\*



## **POSTMODERNISM**

<b>Tuesday, Nov 13</b>	<b>Postmodernism – theories and practices</b> [JSTR/BBD] Readings TBA
<b>Thursday, Nov 15</b>	<b>Postmodernism – presentations &amp; lecture topic TBD</b> Readings pending topics selection  *** RESEARCH PAPER AND PRESENTATION due in class, if you are presenting today ***
<b>Tuesday, Nov 20</b>	<b>Postmodernism – presentations &amp; lecture topic TBD</b> Readings pending topics selection  *** RESEARCH PAPER AND PRESENTATION due in class, if you are presenting today ***
<b>Thursday, Nov 22</b>	<b>NO CLASS – Happy Thanksgiving!</b>
<b>Tuesday, Nov 27</b>	<b>Postmodernism – presentations &amp; lecture topic TBD</b> Readings pending topics selection  *** RESEARCH PAPER AND PRESENTATION due in class, if you are presenting today ***
<b>Thursday, Nov 29</b>	<b>Postmodernism – presentations &amp; lecture topic TBD</b> Readings pending topics selection  *** RESEARCH PAPER AND PRESENTATION due in class, if you are presenting today ***
<b>Tuesday, Dec 4</b>	<b>Postmodernism – presentations &amp; lecture topic TBD</b> Readings pending topics selection  *** RESEARCH PAPER AND PRESENTATION due in class, if you are presenting today ***
<b>Thursday, Dec 6</b>	<b>Postmodernism – presentations &amp; lecture topic TBD</b> Readings pending topics selection  *** RESEARCH PAPER AND PRESENTATION due in class, if you are presenting today ***
<b>Thursday, Dec 13</b>	*** <b>FINAL EXAM</b> *** The exam will run from 1:30 – 4:15 PM

## **OPPORTUNITIES TO SEE AND LEARN ABOUT CONTEMPORARY ART**

There are many opportunities on campus, in the metro DC area, and within driving distance for you to explore contemporary art and gain a richer understanding. Please visit the Blackboard link to events, exhibitions, and public works available to you right now! Take advantage of these opportunities and to your proximity to cities hosting much contemporary art (DC, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore ....). To listen to lectures and view contemporary art as you study it, will benefit you greatly. It will allow you to “practice” what we are learning in class, reinforcing the ideas, and helping you clarify them.

I will update these listings as the semester progresses. Feel free to add suggestions of your own!

**Of note are two GMU-sponsored activities that you will want to check out:**

- ***Visual Voices – a lecture series on contemporary art, held on campus.***  
For the list of speakers, dates, location, and more information visit:  
<http://soa.gmu.edu/exhibitions/visual-voices.html>
- ***ArtsBus – monthly day-trips to NYC***  
For dates, prices, and more information visit: <http://artsbus.gmu.edu>